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HELPING FARM YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR CHOICES

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SUMMARY

The ability to choose is one characteristic that differentiates man from all other living things. In mankind this ability is present in its highest development. This fact makes him far more responsible for his choices than any other creatures. The correct use of this ability to choose gives farm young people an unusual opportunity to determine what the outcome of their lives shall be.

Life is just one choice after another. The oftener decisions are made for individuals the less such individuals will develop their ability to choose when later in life they are confronted with situations which call for the making of similar decisions. Farm young people learn to choose by choosing. Through extension work with farm young people an effort is made to supplement their training received on the farm and in the home by aiding them in making the most satisfying choices. Some of the more important choices are, what vocation to follow, whether to farm or not, and what kind of a farm home they will ultimately want to set up.

This circular has been compiled to set forth the thinking processes involved in meeting some of the farm young people's situations. It is concerned primarily with the managerial or thinking phase of these choices. The logic of the situations - the natural consequences - are considered here.

DISTRIBUTION.— A copy of this circular has been sent to each extension worker and to each agricultural-college library and experiment-station library.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE CONTINUALLY CHOOSING

Human beings can to a large extent determine in what environment they will live and what in that environment they will make a part of their life. The farmer determines in what fields his animals will pasture and how they will be housed and fed. Young people decide from available occupations by which one they will earn their living. They also choose whether they will be most active in the church, in school affairs, in drama, music, or in civic affairs. Their lives are influenced not only by their environment but by what they choose out of that environment.

Whenever a young farmer carrying on his corn enterprises comes to the point where the variety of corn to be planted must be determined, he has to consider a number of alternatives in selecting his seed corn. That is, he must decide whether to use the same variety he has used in the past, the one he saw on the demonstration plat, the one his neighbor grew, or the one offered him by his seed dealer. If the demonstration has been effective, it will aid him in deciding what variety to grow. Extension work is attempting to improve the ability of young people to choose more accurately when they arrive at decision points in their farming and homemaking. In connection with every farm and home operation, farm young people are confronted with a number of alternatives or optional situations.

MANIPULATION V. MANAGERIAL ABILITY

Action is the result either of conscious choosing and of sufficient drive, urge, or feeling of anticipated satisfaction to lead to activity. Through extension work we are attempting to develop two different kinds of ability as a basis for action: (1) Skill in manipulation (motor ability), and (2) skill in thinking, or managerial ability. When we attempt to teach a young man a better method of pruning his fruit trees, we show him how to handle his saw more effectively by the expenditure of less energy and the correct method of removing the limb (motor ability), as well as how to choose the limbs to be removed and the type of tree to work for through his pruning operations (managerial ability). Similarly, in connection with culling poultry, we can teach this young man how to hold the hen and make the various physical tests (motor ability). We can aid him in deciding in regard to his system of poultry management whether or not to adopt the culling of poultry several times each year (managerial ability). The former involves manipulative ability primarily, the latter managerial ability. And so we might go through the entire category of farm and home operations and find that these two types of skill would be involved in most of them.

In homemaking the dressing and feeding of the young child involves manipulative skill, whereas the planning of the wardrobe and diet of the child involves managerial skill. The refinishing of the kitchen table requires motor skill primarily, whereas the reorganization of the kitchen equipment requires managerial ability. Manipulative skills can become habits and serve their function effectively. Managerial skills require conscious thinking and exercise of judgment.

Much of the work required in farming and homemaking is done in a routine, fixed manner in accordance with habits developed by the individual. Generally these habits become highly standardized and are subject to little change.

RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHOICES

Situations where judgment has to be exercised or a choice made vary widely in complexity. What variety of seed grain to use locally can be determined with a high degree of accuracy, but the acres to devote to these crops on a particular farm is a far more complex problem. In the latter case many factors have to be considered and more judgment exercised.

The amount of capital a young man accumulates is far more significant to his future financial success or failure in farming than whether he cultivates corn or cotton tomorrow. The ideals the young woman has as to the kind of home she wants have more influence on her future happiness than whether she serves white or rye bread for supper. The choice of a vocation is far more important in the career of the individual than whether he or she milks the cows or feeds the calves tonight.

CHOOSING A VOCATION

Because an individual was born on a farm is no reason to believe that this individual inherits qualities to make him or her succeed on a farm. Farm young people are as much concerned in receiving information that will enable them to make the best vocational choice as are those born of parents engaged in any other occupation. Success in a vocation depends largely upon the native abilities of the individual concerned and the application of these abilities in an occupation where they will be most effective. Most farm young people are faced with the question of whether they will farm or not. If their decision is negative, they will want to consider the best information available concerning nonfarm occupations.

Some farm boys and girls are lacking in qualities that will make them successful in farming to the same extent as those who are the children of parents in other occupations. Therefore, in making the choice of an occupation, they need to consider first what personality traits, individual abilities, and interests may cause them to succeed or fail in farming. If they are not planning to farm they will also want to know what are the opportunities in the occupations where these traits, abilities, and interests might be employed.

Unfortunately too little is known about the human factors conducive to success in farming, but the young man who dislikes animals, does not handle a horse gently, has difficulty in doing his task on time, and does not like to work in the dirt, will want to stop to consider whether he should farm or not. Even if he might inherit a farm free from debt, he should question whether or not he is making the best use of his life if he attempts to make his living from farming.

If an individual wants to be with a crowd, work indoors, and have someone else assume responsibility for his economic welfare, life in an industrial center might appeal to him, but if he wants to work in the open and with living things, be his own manager, and live close to nature, then farming might appeal to him.

After farm young people have decided that they want to earn their living by farming, the route they should travel becomes fairly clear. However, if they decide to go into some other occupation they would want to consider what training they are able to take, the conditions under which they would have to work, the wages they might receive, and the home life they might enjoy.

CHOOSING TO MAKE A HOME ON A FARM

The occupations of farming and farm homemaking are intimately connected. Therefore, the young woman who chooses a farmer as a life partner not only chooses a husband but also the occupation of her husband. In many other professions the occupation of the husband has relatively little to do with the home life but on the farm they are of necessity each a part of the other. The young woman needs to be as much concerned about her ability to succeed under farm homemaking conditions as the young man needs to be in the choice of farming as an occupation. If she likes a home in the wide-open spaces, or to get away from the crowd and noise, and to be part of an independent business, she might find more happiness on a farm than in a city. A young woman who cannot bear to handle a broody hen, who is neither inclined to have meals ready on time nor enough interested to discuss the farm operations intelligently, might find homemaking on the farm very uncongenial.

Other factors such as age, schooling, ancestral background, and religious beliefs have to be considered, but occupational congeniality plays a more important part in farming than in any other occupation.

CHOOSING A FARM TO OPERATE

If a young man decides to take up farming, the choice of the road that he is to travel is fairly definite. Generally, as soon as farm young people who have chosen farming as their life work marry, if they have not already done so, they begin to plan to rent or buy a farm. With this in mind, they are confronted with such questions as (1) what kind of home they will ultimately want to possess, (2) how they are going to plan to realize it, (3) what type of farming to follow, (4) what size of farm to operate, (5) what renting agreement, if they rent, has to be made, (6) what type of farming fulfills their requirements, (7) where capital can be obtained?

If a young man purchases a farm it is difficult to expand either by purchasing another farm or additional land. The following outline indicates some of the points that should be considered before taking title to a farm.

Factors to consider

1. Procuring a farm.

What kind of farming to follow.
Whether to buy or rent.
What price to pay for a farm.
Where to look for a farm to purchase.
Whether to buy or rent additional land.
What rent to pay.
Where to look for a farm to rent.
How to proceed to rent the farm.

2. Determining what enterprises to conduct.

What crops to grow.
What livestock to keep.

3. Determining the extent of each enterprise.

How much land to devote to each crop.
How many animals of each class of livestock to keep.

CHOOSING THE TYPE OF HOME TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Homemaking choices and decisions also follow a certain sequence. Very often they hinge upon the allotment of cash funds available for living to certain phases of homemaking. When the available funds are limited, whatever adjustment is made has an important bearing not only on the phase to which certain funds are assigned, but on all the other phases. For example, if, in relation to actual needs, a very limited amount of money is assigned to food, either the farm will have to produce an abundance or the food standards will have to be sacrificed. In turn, the choices made in the allotment of money to food together with the extent of farm production will control the kind of meals that can be planned. If the garden and other enterprises are not planned to meet nutritional requirements, well-balanced meals cannot be served unless funds are available to purchase the deficiencies.

If too much money out of the clothing budget is allotted to one member of the family, the other members of the family will have to sacrifice their clothing standard; or, if too much is allotted to clothing of the family the expenditures such as for health, education, and recreation will have to be reduced.

Some young women have a mental picture of a well-furnished house as their objective in the choice of home expenditures, and others the health and education of their children, still others desire to have their children well dressed or to move in certain social groups. These objectives also have a bearing on both the choice of a life partner and a farm where the future home is to be.

Home Choices

Budgeting resources for the home.

Food.
Clothing.
Improved dwelling.
Home furnishing and equipment.
Fuel, light, etc.
Education.
Recreational and social activities.
Church and charity.
Health.

Each one of these choices in regard to budgeting resources for the home involves additional subsidiary choices, as illustrated below.

<u>Food</u>	<u>Clothing</u>
Source of supply.	Making.
Standards.	Buying.
What to produce.	
What to buy.	
Meal planning.	
Preparation.	
Canning.	
Preserving.	

WHATEVER THE CHOICE, A CONSEQUENCE FOLLOWS

Certain choices are followed by certain consequences. If, for example, Rosen rye is sown, the same variety of rye will be harvested. If smutty wheat is used the resultant crop will be smutty also. If too much of the available fund for living is spent for clothes, other parts of the living will suffer accordingly.

One's life is shaped by the consequences of one's choices. In some cases the consequences can be predicted with a high degree of accuracy. However, one's choices may be based upon emotions that have been misguided. An unfounded prejudice against farming may lead an individual to the choice of an occupation for which he is poorly qualified. After a choice is made natural laws and forces go into effect. The result can be observed. Judgment improved, and a better forecast made of what might happen under similar circumstances in the future.

The consequences of some choices can never be corrected, others only with great difficulty. Often, earnest, constructive thinking is cheaper than trying to undo the result of an unfortunate decision.

There is a sequence in choices. The selection of seed corn comes before planting in fact and should be so considered in thinking. Choice of the occupation an individual desires to enter should be studied before entering upon apprenticeship training. The effect of subordinate decisions is

influenced by the choices that precede them.

Many of the choices that farm young people have to make have been studied and data have been obtained with which the judgment of these young people may be guided. Varieties of crops, control of diseases and pests, and rations for livestock have been studied by agricultural experiment stations, and answers obtained that are effective guides. Other types of choices have not been so thoroughly investigated. The uninvestigated types of choices involve more factors and may be more influenced by the emotions than the types investigated. The choice of a mate, of a vocation, or of a farm is likely to involve more sentiment and emotion and more factors than the choice of a variety of corn, or how to kill potato bugs, or what to feed the dairy cow.

THE GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S ABILITY TO CHOOSE

A child does not choose its parents. But quickly it begins to react to its environment and determine what and when it will eat, when and how much it will sleep. Although the parents as a part of the child's environment determine the activities of the child, yet the child, in choosing, determines how it will meet similar situations in the future. As the child grows older it becomes more and more independent of its parents; its choices are more the result of its own initiative.

As the individual's life evolves, his drives, urges, and emotions change along with the environment in which he finds himself. When young persons have reached the stage in their life cycle where they leave school their choices are dominated by certain factors that have not been present in previous years. Basically every individual has a life plan, pattern, or objective which governs the way he decides. This plan or pattern may be dominated by the desire to accumulate money, to secure an education, to attain physical comfort, to serve others, or to develop a certain type of character. All these elements may be a part of every individual's pattern, but their relative importance varies widely. This pattern is strongly influenced by an individual's inherited urges, drives, attributes, or talents. His life plan should capitalize on the effective use of these influences.

LEARNING TO CHOOSE BY CHOOSING

The oftener choices are made for individuals the less skill the individuals will develop to choose wisely when confronted later with similar situations. If the young man does not learn to use his time to advantage before beginning to operate a farm on his own account he will have difficulty with himself when he does start. If the young woman never has an opportunity to manage money before marriage she will have difficulty in adjusting her budget when she sets up a home of her own.

The extension program with farm young people endeavors to supplement the training they receive at home.

The more farm young people observe, read, study, and discuss, the more likely they are to exercise good judgment. Information without training in the ability to use it is ineffective. Whenever possible their ideas should be tested out or verified by some means or other.

TIME AS A FACTOR IN CHOOSING

Many factors or influences have to be considered in making choices. The individual has to take into consideration or weigh all these factors and their effect in enabling him to arrive at correct choices or decisions. The time element - period between when decision is made and when it can be repeated again under similar circumstances - is much more significant in connection with certain choices than it is with others.

The shorter the time required before an error in judgment can be discovered the more quickly the mistake can be corrected.

CHOICES AND TIME REQUIRED TO REALIZE AND CORRECT ERROR

CHOICES	TIME REQUIRED
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How long to boil eggs	5 minutes
What spray to use on potatoes	2 days
What variety of wheat to sow	1 year
What mating of livestock to make	3 to 5 years
What refrigerator to buy	5 to 10 years
What varieties of apple trees to plant	5 to 15 years
What type of house to build	25 to 50 years
What farm to buy	Until old age
Whom to choose as a mate	Lifetime

ENVIRONMENT AS A FACTOR IN CHOOSING

Economic and social changes require that the individual not only consider what has happened in the past but how his present situation differs from that of the past and how it is likely to affect his future. Young people of this age have to consider their situation with reference not only to their own lives but to the world in which they will operate in the future. Farming today is different from that of 50 years ago, and the farming in which the next generation will participate will be different from that of today.

Agriculture and homemaking are dynamic. Farmers and homemakers constantly are forced to choose. In no large area in the United States is farming carried on with the same arrangement of enterprises or with the same technique as it was 50 to 75 years ago. Since dairying has been a part of the agriculture of the North Atlantic region of the United States for over 100 years, an analysis of some of the changes that have taken place in dairying might show how extensive and significant these changes have been. Fifty to seventy-five years ago practically all cows were milked by hand. The milk was taken into the house and made into butter and cheese by the farm family. In many cases the butter was then marketed directly to the ultimate consumer. The feed used in this type of farming was raised on the farm, the power being furnished by horses also raised on the farm and fed with home-grown feeds. In many cases at the present time cows are milked by power either from gasoline engine or electric plant. The milk is cooled in an electric refrigerator. It is placed on a platform where an organization takes it up and puts it through all the necessary processes from the time it is taken from the platform until it reaches the ultimate consumer. In other words, a large proportion of the processes of converting the products of the soil, through dairying, into a form for use by the ultimate consumer, have been transferred from the farm family to another plant and another group of persons.

Homemaking also has changed. Formerly the housewife did all her washing on a washboard; now she uses a washing machine, in many cases driven by gasoline or electric power. The past generation went courting with a horse and buggy; the present generation goes courting in an automobile. The horse was raised on the farm and its motive power was farm produced, but every time the wheels of the automobile turn, money is being burned up. In other words, our standards of living are changing so that we have to increase the volume of the farm business to attain not only our former standard of living but to increase it still more to satisfy our rising standard.

Farm young people have to determine how to utilize this heritage from the past in such a way as to gain the most out of the environment in which they will have to live. The young man choosing the dairy farm as a way to earn a living is confronted with the same basic choices or decisions as those of his grandfather, but his optional situations or the environment under which he will have to choose have changed.

Choices are important in shaping one's life, whether made with all alternatives given serious consideration or by thoughtless drifting. One's goal in life is arrived at by the soundness of the choices made along the route.

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